

LESSON 29

Last week we began our study of the seventy week prophecy by looking at verse 24. We discovered that verse 24 is crucial to understanding verses 25-27 because (a) verse 24 gives us the focus of the prophecy (Daniel's people and their holy city, Jerusalem), and (b) verse 24 gives us the all-important time frame, which is the first century — the time when all six of the events in verse 24 were accomplished.

We then read verses 25-27, and we began looking at the nine events that are shown on your handout from last week (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com), represented by the eight letters A through H (with event F having two events).

We discussed and placed Events A, B, and C onto the seventy week time line. Event A is the command to rebuild the city, which begins the 70 weeks. Event B is the coming of the Messiah, which comes at the end of the first 69 weeks. Event C is the rebuilding of the city, which is placed at the end of the first seven weeks.

That means we are now ready to consider Event D, but let's skip Event D for now and look instead at Event E (for a reason that will become clear in a moment).

What is Event E?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 27 — *“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”*

When we get to Event E, we are faced with a crucial question for our interpretation — who is the “he” referred to in Events D, E, and F? (They are circled on your

handout.) Does this pronoun “he” refer to the same person in each instance or to different people?

As for that last question, read verse 27 again — “And **he** shall confirm the covenant ... **he** shall cause the sacrifice ... to cease, and ... **he** shall make it desolate...” I think a natural understanding of that language suggests that only one person is in view: *he* does this, *he* does that, and *he* does this other thing. Unless we have some very, very strong indicator to the contrary, I think we should look for one person as the subject of the pronoun “he” in Events D, E, and F. If we look for the antecedent of the pronoun, we have two possibilities in verse 26 — either the Messiah or the prince that shall come (the Roman General Titus).

Of those three “he” events (D, E, and F), I have started with Event E. Why? Because I think Event E is the most helpful of the three in determining the identity of that one person to whom the word “he” refers.

What happens with Event E? “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” The location of this event in the seventy weeks is easy — this event occurs during the final week, and unlike some other final week events, this one apparently occurs throughout the entire final week.

What is the event? “He shall confirm the covenant.” Two questions — which covenant, and how is a covenant confirmed? (And we still have our initial question remaining: who is doing the confirming?)

Which covenant?

We have two obvious possibilities: the old covenant and the new covenant. The focus of this prophecy is “thy people and upon thy holy city” (speaking to Daniel in verse 24), and so we might suspect that this covenant is the *old* covenant. However, as we know, the new covenant was the culmination of the promises under the old covenant, and the new covenant came into force under the Messiah, who (as evi-

denced at least by Event B) seems to be the focus of the final week, and so we might just as easily suspect that this covenant is the *new* covenant.

We know that the new covenant came into effect after the death of Jesus, that is after the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16). We know that the ordinances of the old covenant were nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). And we know that the new covenant made the first old, which then vanished away (Hebrews 8:13). But surface vestiges of the old covenant remained for some time after the cross. Hebrews 10:11 says that “every priest **standeth** (present tense) daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” They were still going through the motions, as their old covenant waxed old and decayed (Hebrews 8:13). After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, they no longer went through the motions because they were no longer able to do so.

We see the phrase “last days” often in the Bible. Whenever we do, we should always ask, “the last days of what?” Often the phrase “last days” refers to the last days of the old covenant, and particularly to the time between when the new covenant came into force at the cross and when the old covenant finally vanished in AD 70 after waxing old and decaying. Acts 2:17 refers, for example, to the “last days” as including the establishment of the kingdom in Acts 2. I think those “last days” denote the entry of the new covenant and the exit of the old, which, although no longer in force after the cross, continued in practice until the temple was destroyed in AD 70 — and to this very day the sacrificial system has never been restored after that complete and final desolation.

Think about Hebrews 8:13 again — “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old **is ready to vanish away.**” Doesn’t that verse suggest that the old covenant had not yet vanished away when Hebrews was written, but was ready to do so? And we know that Hebrews was written before AD 70. How? Because Hebrews 10:11 shows the priests still standing and offering sacrifices. After AD 70, Hebrews 10:11 would have been written in the *past* tense.

Are we saying that the old covenant remained in effect until AD 70? No. The old covenant was removed at the cross and was replaced with the new covenant. Hebrews 7:14 makes it very clear that Christ could not become a high priest until the old covenant was removed, and Hebrews 8:1 confirms that Jesus was High Priest in the first century (as he is now).

So then which covenant is in view in 9:27? Let's hold off some more on answering that question until we look at another question.

How is a covenant confirmed?

To answer that question we can turn to Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:17 — *And this I say, that the covenant, that was **confirmed** before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

That verse is discussing two covenants: God's covenant with Abraham and the old Mosaic covenant with Israel. We are told in that verse that the law came 430 years after the covenant with Abraham was *confirmed*. What was that confirmation?

First, that confirmation cannot be anything that occurred during the lifetime of Abraham. Why? Because Abraham preceded Moses by over 600 years, not 430 years. Abraham was 75 when God first called him (Genesis 12:4) and 99 when Isaac was conceived (Genesis 17:1; 18:14). By the time Isaac was born, the original promise had been in effect for 25 years. Isaac then lived to the age of 180, died, and was buried in Canaan (Genesis 35:29). Isaac's son Jacob was an old man himself by the time his sons went down to Egypt to beg food from Joseph. The family of Jacob went to Egypt as honored guests, only to wind up as slaves generations later. They spent over 400 years in Egypt (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:15) before Moses led them out and they received the law at Sinai. The traditional period between Abraham and Moses is 645 years.

So what event then did Paul by inspiration have in mind when he wrote that the covenant was *confirmed* 430 years before the law?

The birth of Isaac could hardly qualify as “offspring as numerous as the stars” (Genesis 15:5). Nor could the promise of possessing the land (Genesis 15:7) be dated from the time of Abraham, who, as far as we know, never bought a square foot of property except the burial plot of Sarah.

What then is it that happened 430 years before the law and that *confirmed* the covenant with Abraham? It must be the fulfillment of the prophecy that Abraham’s offspring would go down into a foreign land to be enslaved for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). That helps us answer the question as to how a covenant is confirmed. A covenant is confirmed when the events of the covenant take place, or perhaps *begin* to take place.

So which covenant is it in Daniel 9:27?

It could still be either one. Events from each covenant were occurring in the first century. The dire warnings from the first covenant were about to occur with finality in the events of AD 70, and the establishment of the eternal kingdom and the wonderful miracles and signs were occurring under the new covenant, even before the new covenant came into effect at the cross.

But, and this is the central clue that tips the scales in my view, which of those events were just *beginning* to occur under the covenant and were occurring during the *entirety* of that final week, which we know begins with the coming of the Messiah? In my opinion, the confirmation of the **new covenant** better fits a week-long confirmation.

And why would the *old* covenant need any confirmation? It had already been confirmed over and over again. What Jew in the first century could have possibly complained that God had not confirmed the old covenant? And who was it in the first century who needed the old covenant to be confirmed?

The better interpretation in my view is that the covenant in verse 27 is the *new* covenant. Jesus and the apostles confirmed the new covenant over and over again starting with Jesus' own miracles and continuing with the miracles of the apostles up until AD 70. Those who rejected that covenant had no excuse for doing so — it had been confirmed for them by the Messiah himself.

Matthew 11:3-5 — *And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Most of those signs had been prophesied under the old covenant (Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 26:18-19, 61:1), and Jesus was confirming the new covenant by performing those signs. In fact, that was the point of Jesus' answer to the disciples of John — do you want to know if I am he, then look for the confirmation in “those things which ye do hear and see.”

Who then is confirming the covenant?

That is, back to our original question, who is the “he” who is confirming the covenant? We have now answered that question. Jesus confirmed the new covenant personally, and he did so through his miracles and through those he sent out to preach.

Mark 16:20 — *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

Hebrews 2:3-4 — *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

This type of confirmation had long been prophesied for the last days.

Acts 2:16-17 — *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

Peter was saying in Acts 2 that the “last days” prophecy of Joel 2 was happening on that first day of Pentecost following the resurrection — “this is that,” Peter said. All present could see the confirmation of the new covenant, and many seeing it believed and were baptized.

The new covenant was confirmed by Jesus and the apostles. No one who rejected the new covenant had any excuse for doing so. It had been confirmed over and over again by mighty works. And yet the Pharisees had witnessed those wonderful miracles and had ascribed them not to God but to Satan! Is it any wonder that it was always in that context that Jesus discussed the unforgivable sin? What could be worse than to witness the mighty works confirming the new covenant and to ascribe those mighty works to Satan? Yet that is what some did. And for that reason, their final desolation was coming.

God had promised Daniel long ago that the covenant would be confirmed to Daniel’s people during the prophetic week leading up to the end in AD 70. We know from Romans 1:16 that the gospel was to the Jew *first* and also to the Greek. Why? Why to the Jew first? Was it just because the Jews were there first and it took longer to get the message to the others? I don’t think the evidence supports that conclusion.

Matthew 10:5-6 — *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Matthew 15:24 — *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

I think we see a much better explanation here in Daniel 9. God had promised that the covenant would be confirmed to the Jews in the time between the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of their city. I think that is why the message went first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

What is Event D?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 27 — *"In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease"*

The "oblation" in verse 27 refers to the evening temple sacrifice, which would have been done around 3 PM. We saw the same word earlier in verse 21. Sometimes "oblation" was used to denote a grain offering.

Event D should be easier to place now that we know who the "he" is in this verse. Had we started with Event D we might have thought "he" was the Roman General Titus who destroyed the city — and many commentaries adopt that view. And Titus certainly did cause the sacrifices to cease. Not only was the temple destroyed, but the priestly records were also destroyed, which effectively brought the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system to an end — and they have not returned even to this very day. Antiochus had earlier done the same thing, and it is described as such in Daniel 11:31. So it would certainly be correct to say that Titus caused the sacrifices to cease, and if we were willing to say that the "he" in this clause does not have to be the same "he" in the prior clause, then maybe it is Ti-

tus. But if we take each “he” in this verse to be the same person, then it is Jesus who is causing the sacrifices to cease because Titus did not confirm the covenant.

If the “he” is Jesus, then we have two possibilities for when the sacrifices ceased. They ceased first in *substance* at the cross, and second, they ceased in *practice* in AD 70 — and Jesus caused both cessations (using Titus as a tool in the judgment of AD 70).

The sacrifices ceased at the cross because at that time they lost their meaning and their reason for existence. Those sacrifices pointed forward to the cross, and so after the cross they ceased, even if the actions of the priests continued on for some time after the cross.

Hebrews 10:1-3 — *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

Hebrews 10:11-12 — *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*

And the sacrifices also ceased in AD 70 with the judgment against Jerusalem, which Matthew 24 describes as a coming of Christ in judgment against the city.

So which is it? The cross or AD 70? The timing we are given helps us answer that question — this cessation occurred *midway* through the final week. The destruction of the city is the focus and occurs at the *end* of the prophecy (Event F, which we

will consider next), so on that basis I favor the view that this midweek event is the cross. The Jewish sacrifices ceased at the cross.

And if the midweek event is the cross, then that helps us answer an earlier question — what event in the life of Christ is the coming of the Messiah in Event B? It must be either his birth or his baptism, and I favor the latter because that is when Jesus began to confirm the covenant, which we know occurred throughout this final prophetic week.

Jesus begins his ministry at the beginning of that final week, he is cut off midway during that week (Event G, which we will discuss in just a moment), and he returns in judgment at the end of that week. All throughout that week, his new covenant is being confirmed with signs and wonders.

What is Event F?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — *“And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

Verse 27 — *“For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”*

These verses describe the desolation that Jesus told us in Matthew 24:34 happened in the first century. So where do these verses go on our seventy week time line? The language itself answers that question (and, in fact, we have already answered that question as well). Verse 26 twice refers to “the end,” and verse 27 refers to the “consummation.” Event F is located at the end of the seventy weeks, and it describes the first century destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

By the way, the use of a “flood” in verse 26 to depict the judgment presents a problem for the premillennialists. “The **end** thereof shall be with a **flood**.” Is the “end”

in that verse the end of the world at the end of all time as many teach? If so, then how do we reconcile that view with the covenant in Genesis 9:15?

Genesis 9:15 — *And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

What is Event G?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — *“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”*

Verse 26 tells us that this event and Event H occur after the 62 weeks, which tells us they occur in the final week, but verse 26 does not tell us **when** in that final week they occur.

We know what the cutting off means.

Isaiah 53:8 — *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

And we know what it means that the cutting off was not for himself.

Isaiah 53:4-5 — *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

This “cutting off” ushered in the blessings listed in verse 24. It also resulted in the destruction of the city in AD 70 because the Jews were at that time punished for having rejected and having cut off God’s son.

Other translations have “and after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.” What would that mean? That language would point toward the faithless Jews who rejected Jesus. They were not his people. He had nothing in their city and in their sanctuary. And remember from Matthew 24 that Jesus had told his followers what to look for so that they could escape the destruction of the city. Those that were his escaped, while those no longer his were destroyed.

So when in the final week did this cutting off occur? We have already answered that question when we looked at Event D. If we were correct that Event D happened at the cross, then this cutting off must be pointing to the same location as Event D, midway through the final week.

What is Event H?

Let’s start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — *“And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”*

We have also already placed Event H. It refers to the destruction of the city, which happened at the end of the final week, where we also placed Event F.

Matthew 23:37-38 — *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stoniest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

Matthew 24:15 — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)*

Luke 21:20 — *And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*

Is that view the only possibility?

No. Some argue that the final week begins at the cross, which would then put the destruction of the temple by Titus at the midway point, and the final and complete destruction of the city at the end of the final week. That is certainly possible, but I don't think it fits as well. Placing the cutting off at the beginning of the final week seems unlikely because of the confirmation that is occurring throughout the entire week. Placing the cutting off at the end of the week wouldn't work at all because that is when Jesus is coming in judgment against those who cut him off. If for that reason we conclude, as I think we should, that the cutting off occurs midweek, then that confirms we were right when we concluded that the cessation of sacrifices that occurred midweek also refers to the cross. Either way, the seventy weeks end with the first century destruction of Jerusalem, and we can't give on that point for any number of reasons, not the least of which is that Jesus himself pointed us back to Daniel for the fulfillment of that very event.

How are symbols used in this prophecy?

There are several important symbols in the prophecy of the seventy weeks (or the seventy sevens) — and, not surprisingly, they all involve the number seven.

First, the “week” itself is symbolic. Recall that the word translated “week” is the Hebrew word for seven. Seven denotes perfection. That the week is the basis for the entire prophecy lets us know that this prophecy is going to perfectly accomplish whatever it is about (which, as we have seen, is the judgment of Daniel's people and the holy city). We see this same symbol with the use of seventy weeks, or

seventy sevens, which reinforces the perfection of the judgment. The figure of “seventy sevens” is found elsewhere in the Bible.

Genesis 4:24 — *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

Matthew 18:21-22 — *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

In each case, the “seventy times seven” figure denotes something that is perfect and complete. (Perfect and complete vengeance and perfect and complete forgiveness.) What was perfect and complete about the decree that Daniel received in Chapter 9? The decree in Daniel 9 was God’s final decree with respect to the Jews under the law of Moses. It was the perfect and complete end for the old covenant, which at that point vanished away after waxing old and decaying. This decree represented the completion of God’s work with regard to the Jews. This decree embodied all of the elements that were needed to completely fulfill all of God’s promises to the Jews. As far as God was concerned, this decree was his final word with regard to the Jewish age. The “seventy by seven” symbol was the perfect symbol to denote this statement of God’s completed activity. God is telling Daniel that this is a final decree. One day the Messiah will come, and the city will be destroyed. That all happened in the first century.

Second, we see seven weeks depicting the time in which the temple and the city are rebuilt and restored. Again, God had foretold these events, and God caused them to happen. The restoration was perfect, but that perfection did not prevent the people from once again rebelling and falling away from God.

Third, we have one week at the end of the seventy week period, which includes the time from the coming of the Messiah up until the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. The work of the Messiah was perfect. Jesus accomplished all that he came

to do. (Premillennialists deny this, but they also fail to comprehend the meaning of these beautiful symbols.)

Fourth, we have a half week, three and a half days, which is a broken seven. We have seen this symbol before, and we know it denotes something that is temporary. In this case, the key three and half day period is the second half of the week. Why? Because it begins when the Messiah was cut off; that is, it begins at the cross. Was that the end? Was that permanent? Not at all. Jesus soon came with power and judgment against those who had cut him off. A broken seven is the perfect way to depict Jesus' triumph over death after what to many looked like a defeat at the cross. Any time an event is followed by three and half periods of time, that is God telling us that that event is *not* the end of the story!